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SUBJECT: Goma report September 22: Restiveness  
in Goma, More FARDC Action in Sake

¶1. (SBU) Summary: FARDC launched indiscriminate barrages from Sake into the western heights September 22, uncoordinated with MONUC. Corpses arriving in Goma September 21 stirred angry mobs in the city, and MONUC restricted movement of its civilian employees. Both the government and CNDP appear to have an interest instigating popular unrest focused on MONUC, making it likely that anti-MONUC restiveness in Goma will continue. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) After FARDC's major and unsuccessful offensive September 20 against CNDP positions in the heights to the west and north of Sake, there were only minor skirmishes September 21. However, the FARDC brought in additional heavy artillery to Sake on September 21, and at 03:35 in the morning of September 22 FARDC began an intermittent barrage against CNDP positions in a swathe ranging from south of Sake (hills above Kirotshe) to those over Sake to the west and north. Some 146 rounds were fired from tanks, BMP's, and multi-barreled rocket launchers by mid-afternoon, when firing was still going on against the heights directly to the west of Sake.

¶3. (SBU) Unlike the offensive of September 20, however, on September 22 FARDC did not attempt to send troops up the escarpment, but rather restricted itself to the artillery barrage (described by Deputy Chief of Staff Col. Cunliffe as "fairly indiscriminate"). The North Kivu brigade observed CNDP forces moving closer to Sake in the heights above Kirotshe in the morning, but warned them to desist, and they appeared to have done so. As occurred two days earlier, FARDC gave no warning to MONUC, was uncommunicative (or, as North Kivu brigade described it, was "in disarray"), and placed its artillery close to MONUC bases in the Sake area (with the result that North Kivu brigade was physically endangered and MONUC perceived to be intimately allied with FARDC).

¶4. (SBU) The North Kivu brigade commander and Col. Cunliffe met with General Lukama (in command of FARDC in the Kivus) on the evening of September 21. They hoped that they had "made good progress" with him on coordination, but Lukama also claimed he was "having difficulties" getting the message to his subordinates (in particular, Col. Padiri, in charge of the 82nd brigade at Sake). They met Lukama again on the afternoon of September 22, as the barrage was occurring, and Lukama said that the barrage was in reaction to intelligence reports of an imminent CNDP attack from Mushake. He noted that, in any case, he had never received an order from his chain of command for a ceasefire (despite the Minister of Defense's "reaffirmation" of the ceasefire on September 19). However, he said that he would be meeting all five of his sectoral commanders (including Padiri) the following day September 23 to instruct them to pre-warn MONUC of any further actions.

¶5. (SBU) Meanwhile, restiveness in Goma mounted significantly September 21-22. Fighting in the Sake area, 15 kilometers along the lakeshore west of the outskirts of Goma, has historically always raised the anxiety level in Goma. But in the present case, the government has been stirring up the populace, and the CNDP may also be sowing discord in the city. The immediate spark was the bringing

to Goma September 21 of bodies of soldiers killed the previous day in the Sake area, an event mismanaged by the government. Notified that the bodies were arriving at the Kakatindu military camp, located at the beginning of the western road in Goma, a large group of wives of soldiers gathered at the camp to stage a protest. (Note: the women have long been angry over lack of payment of their husband's wages, and have staged earlier protests.) The wives of the dead soldiers wanted to take possession of the bodies, but FARDC refused the request. (Some of the bodies were reportedly decapitated by CNDP who had infiltrated Sake on the evening of September 20).

16. (SBU) The Minister of Defense and Governor of North Kivu appeared on the scene, hoping to placate the women. The Minister of Defense handed over 2,000 in cash to the women, who pocketed the money but nevertheless hurled stones at the minister and governor, who hastily retreated (suffering smashed windows to their vehicles). The women's protest soon turned into a general riot along the western road, with young men getting into the fray. A passing MONUC convoy was stoned, and three gas stations owned by Tutsis (or, as the crowd seemed to believe, "owned by Nkunda") demolished. The police attempted with little success to control the crowd by firing into the air.

17. (SBU) The women resumed their protest on the morning of September 22, by blocking the western road, and angry crowds also gathered on the northern road (to the airport and MONUC headquarters). MONUC ordered its civilian employees to keep to their residences. The western road remained blocked by the women protesters throughout the day.

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18. (SBU) A separate message follows with an account of a conversation in Goma today that amplifies some of the above narrative and contains knowledgeable (but unconfirmable) perspective on the events of the past 48 hours and of possible trends going forward. In this account, note is taken of the availability in Sake of CNDP sleepers able to engage FARDC within the town limits. This presence is linked to relationships CNDP (and Nkunda personally) have been developing over several years with trades people and pastors moving between Sake and Kitchanga, and parallels are drawn with potential future developments in Goma itself. A source claimed to have been called by Nkunda earlier today and to have received word of Nkunda's exasperation with MONUC's (and the international facilitation's) failure to publicly condemn FARDC's repeated cease-fire violations and his determination to take control of Goma. According to the source, Nkunda said, "Out of respect for MONUC, I have not yet shot down their helicopters, but I have the means and intend to do so if necessary." Taking Goma, Nkunda went, is the only way to get enough attention and respect to ensure that serious discussions with the government will ensue.

GARVELINK